New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1949

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"Detective Story"

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of March 28, 1949*

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NEW YORK POST HOME NEWS
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK SUN

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"Detective Story"

NEW YORK
Herald Tribune
MARCH 24, 1949

= By HOWARD BARNES =

One of the Finest

SIDNEY KINGSLEY'S new play, "Detective Story," is a savage philosophical melodrama. Under the author's cunning direction, the stage of the Hudson has become the detective squad room of a precinct police station, peopled with burglars, a shoplifter, an abortionist and his mouthpiece, complaining citizens, a reporter and members of New York's finest. Performed with staccato emphasis by a large and able company, the production has absorbing documentary realism. Behind the imposing facade of right words and right gestures, it examines the whole problem of law enforcement, as a ruthless detective elects to be judge as well as sleuth and destroys himself in the process. The resolution is more pyrotechnical than satisfying, but the exposition is triumphantly theatrical.

* * *

The chief character of "Detective Story," played with tense conviction by Ralph Bellamy, is a plain-clothes man, whose hatred for a drunken father makes him favor the third degree, pass sentence upon arrest and hold that all human actions are either black or white. When he beats up a surgeon, who has caused the death of two girls by illegal operations, he is trapped by his own fanatical intolerance. Very simply, his wife has been one of the doctor's patients, before he married her. All of the diverse characters in the drama are caught up in this sinister and tragedy-freighted situation. The ending might have been one of many conclusions, none of them designating that the piece had moved anywhere in particular from the opening curtain. It is the wealth of acute observation, the explosive violence and moments of raucous humor which make it eminently entertaining.

* * *

Kingsley has had far more success with the restless action in a station house and finely shaded characterizations than with the overtones which attempt to define the prerogatives of authority. In Boris Aronson's superb setting, he weaves fragments of crime securely together in an electric show. From the plaintive shoplifter to a Navy hero who has committed his first larceny, the figures of "Detective Story" are frighteningly true. Their talk is pungent and provocative. Their doings are compelling. The former Pulitzer Prize winner has written skilfully, but it is his impeccable and imaginative staging which gives his work stage substance. Half a dozen stories are contained in one, with a steadily mounting, if none too consequential, crescendo.

* * *

Bellamy carries the chief acting load of the offering with a remarkable range of restrained make-believe. His unswerving portrayal never fails the script. Whether he is fuming at a clever lawyer, who tells him some irrefutable truths, or moves toward his destruction when he discovers his wife's past, he is very fine. Meg Mundy assists him splendidly as the unfortunate Mrs. McLeod, giving notice again that she is a gifted actress. Lee Grant is excellent as the shoplifter and Joseph Wiseman and Michael Strong characterize a couple of ugly thugs brilliantly. All of the others are first-rate, particularly Warren Stevens as the first time offender, James Westerfield as McLeod's partner, Joe Feinson as the reporter and Alexander Scourby, as a racketeer. "Detective Story" is a rousing melodrama, with philosophical reflections thrown in for good measure.

'DETECTIVE STORY'

Play by Sidney Kingsley; setting by Boris Aronson; costumes by Millie Sutherland; staged by Mr. Kingsley; presented by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse at the Hudson Theatre, March 23, 1949.

The cast:

Detective Dakis...Robert Strauss
Shoplifter.....Lee Grant
Detective Gallagher.....Edward Binns
Mrs. Farragut.....Jean Adair
Joe Feinson.....Lou Gilbert
Detective Callahan.....Patrick McVey
Detective O'Brien....John Boyd
Detective Brody.....James Westerfield
Mr. Sims.....Les Tremayne
Detective McLeod.....Ralph Bellamy
Arthur Kindred...Warren Stevens
Patrolman Barnes...Earl Sydnor
1st Burglar (Charlie).....Joseph Wiseman
2nd Burglar (Lewis).....Michael Strong
Mrs. Bagatelle.....Michelette Burani
Dr. Schneider.....Harry Worth
Lt. Monoghan...Horace McMahon
Susan Carmichael...Joan Copeland
Patrolman Keogh.....Byron C. Halstead
Patrolman Baker...Joe Roberts
Willy.....Carl Griscom
Miss Hatch...Maureen Stapleton
Mrs. Feeney.....Sarah Grable
Mr. Feeney.....Jim Flynn
Crumb-Bum.....Archie Benson
Mr. Gallantz....Garney Wilson
Mr. Prichett....James Maloney
Mary McLeod.....Meg Mundy
Tami Giacoppetti.....Alexander Scourby
Photographer....Michael Lewin
Lady.....Ruth Storm
Gentleman.....John Alberts
Mr. Bagatelle....Joseph Ancona
Indignant Citizen.....Jacqueline Paige

Synopsis: Time—The present. The entire action of the play takes place in the detective squad room of a New York precinct police station. Act I-A day in August, 5:30 p. m. Act II-7:30 p. m. Act III-8:30 p. m.

Daily Mirror
MARCH 24, 1949

'Detective Story' a Good Plug for 'The Finest'

By ROBERT COLEMAN

As if Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse weren't rich enough already—from the proceeds of "Life With Mother," "Life With Father," etc.—they had to come up with another hit last evening. In this case they're the producers and not the authors. The hit is called "Detective Story," and Sidney Kingsley penned and staged it.

The new arrival is a thriller about a hard-boiled detective with an Achilles heel. This long arm of the law isn't content to just arrest malefactors, but he has to beat them up every so often and try them all on his own, before they appear in court. He's happily married and that's his downfall.

This determined law enforcement agent is theatrically a Freudian case. His papa was a bad guy, so every culprit is evil before trial. Then bully-boy discovers that his wife has a past, tries to reconcile himself to it and, when unable to do so, throws himself in front of a killer's bullet.

Author Kingsley has written an authentic and stirring theatre piece about happenings in the detective squad room of a New York precinct police station. You have this on the word of one who covered the 47th Street police station in "the good old days," when your editor gave you a nasty frown if you didn't dig up at least one first-rate human-interest yarn a night.

Tragedy, romance and even humor stalk Kingsley's police station. You learn that there are good cops and bad cops, and the good cops far outnumber the bad. For every block of concrete, there are ten guys on the force with a heart. Sure, they have to maintain law and order. And they do. But most of them temper justice with mercy when they can.

In casting his play, Kingsley has done a magnificent job. So uniformly excellent are the performances that your drama reporter is hard put to single out individuals for citation.

Ralph Bellamy is super as the uncompromising badge-wearer who knows how to track down a criminal but doesn't know how to hold a wife. Meg Mundy has exciting moments as his unfortunate spouse. Horace McMahon is outstanding as a level-headed detective lieutenant. And Lee Grant turns in a wonderful job as a good-natured shoplifter.

Salutes also are due Robert Strauss, Edward Binns, Lou Gilbert, Patrick McVey, John Boyd, James Westerfield, Les Tremayne, Earl Stydnor, Joseph Wiseman, Michael Strong, Warren Stevens, Harry Worth, Joan Copeland and Alexander Scourby for top-flight contributions.

Tremayne, incidentally, earns ten times what he's getting in "Detective Story" from radio programs, and Miss Copeland happens to be the sister of Arthur Miller, who wrote "Death of a Salesman." That radio stars like Tremayne are willing to make sacrifices to appear in the theatre augurs well for the future of "the fabulous invalid."

"Detective Story" has heart, thrills and humanity to recommend it. You won't find a dull moment in an evening at the Hudson Theatre. And you will come away with the feeling that New York's Finest are, on the whole, a pretty swell lot.

New York Post
HOME NEWS
MARCH 24, 1949

Kingsley's Police Play Is Town's Newest Hit

By RICHARD WATTS Jr.

One of Sidney Kingsley's outstanding virtues as a playwright is that he is a brilliant reporter, and his new play, "Detective Story," which had a rousing opening at the Hudson Theatre last night, is filled with pungent and fascinating detail about the everyday activities of a precinct police station in New York. Since Mr. Kingsley also has an interesting, dramatic and thoughtful narrative to present and has provided enough racy and colorful characters to make his play seem "The Front Page" of the law enforcement business, the result is one of the season's most triumphant combinations of a good show and a good play.

In "Detective Story," the author is telling, amid his tumultuous report of the cop at work, of a ruthlessly idealistic detective named McLeod, who has dedicated his life to a war against evil-doers. Hating both crime and criminals, accepting no excuse for either of them and recognizing no mercy in his struggle, he sees the world all in black and white, and has come to loathe the loopholes and the excuses that the law allows. Although a good man with a high moral code, his hatred has become a monomania that makes him unbending, unforgiving and suspicious of human sympathy. His code is to fight savages with savagery.

Quality of Mercy

McLeod can be as merciless to a young war hero, a first offender with no real harm in him, as he is to the really abandoned criminal, because he sees no grays among his blacks and whites. And when he learns that even the wife, whom he adores, had once transgressed his rigid moral code, he cannot find it in his heart to forgive her, as much as he strives to. It is at this point, I think, that Mr. Kingsley's play has its weakest moment. It does seem that he might have found a more effective way to bring home to his hero the fatal error of his chill philosophy of good and evil.

While "Detective Story" thus suffers at its climactic scene, the flow of its melodramatic excitement, the brilliance of its detail and minor characterization and the vitality and gusto of its production keep it continuously arresting. Then, too, even if the actual incident that opens the eyes of his hero is not completely satisfying, the character of McLeod, himself, is always alive, understandable and human in the midst of his inhumanity. Splendidly played by Ralph Bellamy, who here gives the finest performance I have ever seen him offer, McLeod has stature and dignity, evoking pity as well as terror.

Police World

For all the interest and thoughtfulness to be found in the tragic story of Detective McLeod's come-uppance, it is the living, tumultuous world of the plain-clothes men, the uniformed police, the police reporters, and the criminals, both petty and homicidal, that gives the play its exciting quality. Save for the ruthless hero, the police are perhaps rather sentimentally observed, but they are remarkably credible and entertaining to watch. As I have said, there is something of the quality of "The Front Page" in the play's vividness and humor and in its richness of observation.

Mr. Kingsley is also one of the stage's most brilliant directors, and he has done a superb job in keeping his narrative moving with smoothness and dispatch. There is a fine set by Boris Aronson, and there are any number of virtually perfect performances. I have mentioned Mr. Bellamy's personal triumph. Meg Mundy is rather bogged down in the role of the wife, which is the most unsatisfactory in the play. I am afraid I will omit a number of portrayals which deserve mention, but there should be a particular word of admiration for James Westerfield as a fatherly detective, Lou Gilbert as an unhackneyed police reporter, Horace McMahon as an harrassed lieutenant, Warren Stevens as the first offender, Joseph Wiseman as a vicious criminal, Harry Worth as an abortionist, and Alexander Scourby as a racketeer. "Detective Story" is the town's newest hit.

Journal American
MARCH 24, 1949

New Kingsley Play Better Than Good

By ROBERT GARLAND

If, in footlighted make-believe, there's anything better than a good melodrama, it's a better-than-good melodrama. A better-than-good melodrama is Sidney Kingsley's "Detective Story" which, as producers, Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse have brought to their Hudson Theatre. It has everything, including a better-than-good cast and production.

This season's second Group Theatre playwrighting prodigal to come back to Broadway, Mr. Kingsley isn't sore about Hollywood, the Army or anywhere he's been since he won the Drama Critics' plaster paean. Between scenarios and assignments, he's been working on an unfrustrated theatre-piece to be acted on a stage and enjoyed in an auditorium.

• • •

And he hasn't been afraid of turning out a modern and unblushing melodrama, a persistently engrossing, consistently logical and inevitably concluded play. His plainclothesmen are as blood-filled and believable as were his bad guys in "Dead End" and his good guys in "Men in White." They, in turn, deal believably with us all-too-human human beings.

The melodrama has comic, tragic, even lovelorn human details. Yet never do they interfere with the fine, firm forward movement of the detective story-telling. Cops and robbers, reporters and pickpockets, prostitutes and complainants from the Avenue called Park—which they're requested to spell backward—come and go.

But the basic narrative of "Detective Story" cuts straight and sharply through. Even a newspaperman, for once sober in such a play, is not allowed to show-off and interfere.

• • •

Squad Room Locale

Detective McLeod is the pivotal figure of this story about detectives. His is the steady one-track mind in the squad-room of the New York precinct police station in which the almost continuous action of Sidney Kingsley's play occurs. For all-too-personal reasons black is black, white is white and there is no gray anywhere between.

To him, a criminal is a criminal. There are no extenuating circumstances for a first or fiftieth backsliding. He is the annointed member of the constabulary to see that the first, as well as the fiftieth, backslider gets what Detective McLeod believes is coming to him, be that backslider a veteran or abortionist.

Finally, Detective McLeod's messianic complexes come home to damn him. His wife, the very apple of his eye, is drawn into the case of Dr. Schneider and the unseen woman upon whom he has performed what is, to him, merely one more run-of-the-day's-work illegal operation. Dr. Schneider and Mrs. McLeod have met professionally before.

In the final stanza, protagonist Jim McLeod is, in Hamlet's words, hoist with his own petard. Just how, and why, and when, it would be unfair to tell you. For "Detective Story" is a better-than-good melodrama and, as written by Sidney Kingsley and acted under his direction, its tough, inexorable finish should remain in question.

Suffice it to admit that the melodramatic conflict builds firmly to a startling—and, once it has come to pass, inevitable—denouement.

• • •

Casting Excellent

Fresh from its long lasting impact, it is in me to wonder if the cast and production of "Detective Story" could possibly be improved upon. Under the author's assured directional hand, against Boris Aronson's you-can-almost-smell-it squad-room, each of the 22 characters is alive and ticking.

In none of his 84 previous roles —80 in two, four in three dimensions—has Ralph Bellamy even approached the awareness of his Detective McLeod. As his wife, Meg Mundy is a respectable, rather than a respectful, prostitute. Along with her plainclothesman of a husband, I can't quite take her at her word.

I can, however, take, admire and praise the Shoplifter of Lee Grant, the Mr. Sims of Les Tremayne, the habitual burglar of Joseph Wiseman, the unhabitual burglar of Michael Strong, the sober newspaperman of Lou Gilbert, the Arthur Kindred of Warren Stevens, the Susan Carmichael of Joan Copeland, and the unstressed villainy of Harry Worth's Dr. Schneider.

• • •

If I had the space, I'd work a praiseworthy way through the entire cast at the Hudson. Not of late have so many talented individual actors played together, hand-in-hand, to create so impressive an example of teamwork in the theatre. Everybody on stage works cooperatively for the good of Sidney Kingsley's melodrama. And vice versa...

So if there's anything better than a good melodrama, it's "Detective Story." I'm seeing it all over again this evening!

The Sun

MARCH 24, 1949

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

'Detective Story' Vivid Melodrama.

Sidney Kingsley's "Detective Story," which brought a multitudinous cast to the stage of the Hudson last night, is an exciting and jangling melodrama, sharply written and played. It is presented by the firm of Lindsay & Crouse, which has a way of going in for some very expert play producing in odd moments.

The author of "Men in White" and "Dead End" has a liking for, and a knowledge of, the New York city locale. In "Detective Story" he is now writing of the bustle and the turbulence, the frenzy and the violence, of a detective squad room in a precinct police station. His play contains some of the uproar and raucousness of "The Front Page"; it has some of the flavor of a "Third Degree" brought up to date. It's good theater all the way.

"Detective Story" is probably more convincing in its fascinating and photographic detail than it is in its main story line, but there is so much that is vivid and alive in this new play, and so much that is seemingly accurate in the presentation of the behind-the-scene workings of the police department, that it comes through as a vigorous melodrama, and one that will hold your interest throughout. It did mine.

Kingley's play fills the Hudson's stage with cops and thugs, killers and burglars, shoplifters and derelicts, as it presents the case history of Detective McLeod, a dogged and relentless public servant, fiercely conscientious in his sense of duty, and almost demoniacal in high-mindedness. In the three hours in the life of McLeod that are revealed in "Detective Story" he is shown in his efforts to prove the guilt of a wily abortionist. McLeod is not a man for compromises. He is unswerving of purpose to the point of being sadistic, and his very tenacity brings about ugly revelations, and his own devoted wife into the proceedings. "Detective Story" ends in tragedy, following some melodramatic gunfire.

The author has directed his play skillfully; he has written good parts for his actors to play and he has the people at the Hudson to play them. His sketchiest writing has been done for the role of the trapped and harried wife, a part in which Meg Mundy, who was so brilliant in "The Respectful Prostitute," is never too convincing. Ralph Bellamy is extraordinarily good as McLeod, to whom everything is either black or white. When he learns that his wife has erred in years before he knew her he is unable to adjust his standards. Horace McMahon contributes a superb performance as a tough lieutenant.

James Westerfield is excellent as a very humane detective. So is Joseph Wiseman as a vicious burglar-killer of many convictions. Les Tremayne gives an exceptionally vigorous performance as a fiery defense lawyer. Harry Worth is first-rate as the repulsive Dr. Schneider and Lou Gilbert is thoroughly believable as a philosophical police reporter who likes the cops. Lee Grant is amusing as a gabby and moronic shoplifter. Put down superior performances from Joan Copeland, Warren Stevens, Patrick McVey and certainly Alexander Scourby, up from Bleecker Street.

"Detective Story," for which Boris Aaronson has devised a fine and detailed realistic setting, is not a play of any vast stature, but it offers kaleidoscopic detail and impressive performances and it has humor, observation and good writing. It is a new hit, quite definitely.

DAILY NEWS

MARCH 24, 1949

A Dandy Melodrama, 'Detective Story,' Adds Zip to the Season

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Sidney Kingsley's "Detective Story," which was presented last evening at the Hudson by Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, is just what this very good theatrical season should have. Up to now we have had dramas, historical dramas, intelligent comedies, farces and enjoyable musicals, but we have needed a first class melodrama. This one is it.

Besides being a good plot-spinner and a good director, Mr. Kingsley is a good reporter. He has cocked an observant eye and bent an acute ear toward the detectives' room of a New York station house, and has seen and heard enough to make a rousing show. His thirty-four actors, headed by Ralph Bellamy, play "Detective Story" with all possible drive and humor, and Boris Aronson's setting of a squad room is so work-worn, so dismal and so efficient as to make Mr. Aronson the best police reporter in the scenery designing business.

As I watched the play last night I had a feeling that Mr. Kingsley, like myself, has long admired the structure, humor and thrills of "The Front Page," by two happy hooligans named Hecht and MacArthur. The new play is a little more serious than was that prank-some classic of a Chicago headquarters newsroom, but it has a good deal of the same clatter, clutter and impudence. And it has a pip of a shooting finish.

Becomes Judge, Too.

Mr. Bellamy is one of a number of detectives in this squad room—and he is the most unusual. His integrity is unquestioned, and to him right is right and wrong is wrong; he sees only two shades—black and white. To him there are no mitigating circumstances, and a wrongdoer is a wrongdoer even if he is a sensitive and obviously decent young man who stole a few hundred dollars because he was desperately in love.

Mr. Kingsley's play is an honest melodrama with a great deal of color and humor, but it does make this point in order to be serious about itself for a moment—that Mr. Bellamy, supposedly the defender and servant of the people, has unconsciously set himself up as a judge, too. In his zeal he misjudges a prisoner and misjudges his wife—and gets shot four or five times just before the curtain comes down.

"Detective Story" is a vibrant daybook on what can happen in a station house between 5:30 and 9 P. M. Here come dips, shoplifters, really hardened criminals and the complaining victims of these characters. Here are people who are incurably evil and others who need help and a kindly break. Here works an interestingly assorted crew of officers with apparent casualness but deadly efficiency. I've hung around precinct houses enough in my time to know that Mr. Kingsley is an admirable journalist.

A Top-Rank Cast.

As I've said, there are thirty-four players, and each of them should be mentioned favorably in this report. There is time, however, to touch only upon a few of the main ones. Mr. Bellamy's performance is one of fine strength and push. Meg Mundy has two good scenes as his wife. Horace MacMahon is a wonderfully tough and smart lieutenant of detectives. Miss Lee Grant is very funny as a shoplifter; Lou Gilbert is a first class police reporter; Warren Stevens is appealing as a nice young man gone wrong, and Joan Copeland is equally appealing as a girl who is trying to help him.

There are excellent tough types like Joseph Wiseman, Michael Strong and Harry Worth, and one of the best performances of an admirably acted thriller is given by James Westerfield as Mr. Bellamy's detective partner. Mr. Westerfield enchanted me earlier this season with his playing of the Sewer Man in "The Madwoman of Chaillot."

Be good, now, all of you, and keep out of police stations. Go to the Hudson Theatre instead.

New York World-Telegram

MARCH 24, 1949

'Detective Story' Probes With Skill

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

It's a gripping and troubled evening that Sidney Kingsley has made of his study of law enforcement in the melodramatic "Detective Story." His argument concerns the compassion and compromise that let a democracy survive.

If the democratic operation occasionally bungles and protects the wicked, he says, that is still better than allowing the moral absolutist to set himself above the state's prescribed mechanics and administer justice according to messianic instincts. When the latter functions, there is the germ of Fascism or Communism with their ultimate gross inhumanities.

This is a skillfully panoramic play in terms of people, though it occurs entirely in a detective squad room of a precinct police station. The place is a cesspool of passions as the wicked, the misguided and the unfortunate pass through, to be booked for trial. The complaints range from picking pockets to abortion, and there is a wealthy variety of personality among the miscreants, their friends, the plaintiffs and the police.

Masterful Continuity.

Numerous stories are artfully woven through the play, some briefly, others from curtain to curtain, and the author has directed the focus of interest with masterful continuity.

The protagonist here is actually the democratic theory of justice. Opposing it stands the vindictive Detective McLeod, who in psychopathic protest against his own father's unpenalized sadism has grown similarly iniquitous. His present trouble arises from his apparently justified conviction that a certain doctor is guilty of abortions, though crafty methods keep him free of the law.

In a rage he beats the doctor, who pretends fatal injury, and mutters the name of McLeod's wife to the lieutenant in charge of the station.

Life Is Wrecked.

The rest of this main thread shows how McLeod's personal life is wrecked when he cannot even compromise his arbitrary reckoning where his beloved wife is concerned. When it is thought the doctor might die from the beating, McLeod could possibly be justified if he knew of her once having gone to the man for an abortion. But the bitter truth is that he did not know this, and had struck in rage at a man who, rightly or wrongly, was protected by the law.

There is a touching secondary story of a young war hero who has stolen money from his employer in an attempt to win a vain beauty. There gradually evolves a moving love story as the girl's sister fights for the boy. Though he is clearly no criminal, McLeod battles her by convincing the employer that he must press charges, claiming that despite appearances, he can smell wickedness.

Authentic Performances.

The play is studded with authentic performances as the large cast moves in and out of the station. Ralph Bellamy is utterly uncompromising as McLeod, and makes him a tower of misguided conviction. As his wife, Meg Mundy acts with taut and tragic impact, and illustrates a life story in her brief impassioned scenes.

Of the others on the Force, Horace McMahon stands out as the stern but human lieutenant, and James Westerfield is moving as a slightly boozey compassionate detective.

Among the figures being charged, Joseph Wiseman adds a truly extraordinary picture of a fourth time offender, who grows slowly from what seems a merely stupid burglar into a vicious, degenerate, scorpion of evil.

The New York Times

MARCH 24, 1949

FIRST NIGHT AT THE THEATRE

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Although Sidney Kingsley's style is dated, his drama is powerful and straightforward. The style is realistic. The drama is "Detective Story," put on at the Hudson last evening. As in the case of "Dead End," Mr. Kingsley has accumulated a vast number of details about life in New York and given them the form of a vivid drama with a disturbing idea. In thought and workmanship it is so sound that you wish it could also be inspired.

For Mr. Kingsley is an admirable man with a sense of responsibility about the world as well as the theatre. With Ralph Bellamy and Meg Mundy in the leading parts, he has directed an honest performance that is always interesting and becomes exciting and shattering in the last act.

* * *

Out of the day's grist of crime in a New York precinct police station Mr. Kingsley is illustrating an idea about intolerance. After a long period of research and investigation he has caught the look, sound and smell of a busy police station—the cynically humorous competence of the police, the anguish and violence of the criminals. Purely as reporting Mr. Kingsley's drama could hardly be better. He knows the value of human incidents accurately reported and fitted neatly into the lazy pattern of a normal day.

What goes on in the police station is only a savory background for the character of Detective McLeod, who interests Mr. Kingsley most. McLeod is a versatile and gifted cop who hates crime and criminals. He imagines that he lives strictly by principles; and for the most sanctimonious reasons he is hard and sadistic. He has squeezed the humanity out of his soul.

In the course of a pitiless crusade against a doctor charged with criminal abortion, Detective McLeod learns that years ago his wife once went to this doctor for an operation. This devastating news wrecks McLeod's solid pyramid of principles. It is Mr. Kingsley's thesis that no man should assume the Jovian prerogatives of making final judgments about other men.

* * *

Like a conscientious and workmanlike playwright, Mr. Kingsley finally makes his point concretely with terrible force. The character of McLeod is fully drawn with remarkable insight and documentation; and Mr. Kingsley overwhelms him with crushing evidence in the last act. But at least one playgoer cannot help observing that the realistic method is cumbersome, literal and inefficient before the author is ready to get down to business in the last half of the play. It takes thirty-four characters and a hopper full of colorful minor incidents to prove the main point. The machinery of "Detective Story" is unwieldy in comparison with the size of the product.

As his own director, Mr. Kingsley has organized a pungent and meticulous performance. Going beyond literal realism, Boris Aronson has designed a beautiful setting with space, height and color enough to capture the thoughtful tone of the play. The part of McLeod is magnificently played by Ralph Bellamy with a kind of tired, lumbering, introspective passion. Meg Mundy plays the wife with the gaunt and nervous desperation of a young woman who cannot cope with disaster.

In realistic plays, the minor characters are often pithy and graphic. They are especially so in the long cast of "Detective Story." Horace McMahon, as the decisive and alert lieutenant of the station; Joseph Wiseman, as a slippery, glib burglar; Alexander Scourby, as a sleek racketeer; Lee Treymayne, as a sharp-tongued lawyer, and Lee Grant, as a garrulous shoplifter—give especially enjoyable performances.

* * *

As a decent young man horrified to find himself a common criminal, Warren Stevens gives a fine, reticent performance; and Joan Copeland is excellent as a girl who comes to help him protect himself. Lou Gilbert gives a capital performance as a district reporter. As a fatherly detective with an easy manner and a full heart, James Westerfield is superb, and the perfect counterfoil to Mr. Bellamy's fanatic.

In the warm, easy flow of police station routine, these actors contribute scenes and incidents that are sharp, authentic and often comic. Mr. Kingsley's method is plodding. But it has the saving graces of being thorough and sincere; and he makes quite a play of it in the end.